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If a Pundit Falls in the Forest and Nobody's Around...

'Having' versus 'Doing' Expertise in Broadcast Talk.

On Expertise.

- Controversial matter in psychology. Vast body of work.
- Typically addresses quantity of 'retained knowledge' or range of 'acquired practical skills' necessary to be considered an 'expert' within given communities.
 - Skilled memory theory (Ericsson & Stasewski, 1989).
 - Germain's Expertise Scale (Germain, 2006).

Brutal Summary.

- Expertise itself generally (cognitively) conceptualised in terms of an *individual's possession of privileged/specialist knowledge/skills*.
- Research on expertise/expert knowledge dedicated to measurement thereof.
- Approach often problematic when faced with some ground-level questions...

'Expert Knowledge'.

- Two problems here: 'Expert' and 'Knowledge': Is the expertise the property of the expert or the knowledge? Rarely satisfactorily resolved.
- If somebody accrues specialist knowledge but never actualises it, could they be realistically considered an 'expert'?
- Trees and forests:
 - That knowledge makes no difference in the social world.
 - 'Expert' is surely a social identity – defined in terms of comparisons.

Moreover.

- If the same knowledge is produced by the accredited expert and then parroted by 'the man down the pub'...?
 - The knowledge itself might retain status of 'expertise' (if properly credited, perhaps) but;
 - Does not necessarily confer the identity of 'expert' upon the new holder of the knowledge, even though they do now actually hold it.

Internal State?

- In everyday life we don't assess what is *retained*. This is invisible.
- We assess what is USED, how and by whom.
 - Gilbert Ryle (1930) and 'understanding'.
 - Social criteria, defeasible achievement terminology.
 - Subject to contextual argumentation and verification.
- How do we *actually* assess who are the 'real' experts in our fields?
 - Quality of teaching skills?
 - Quality/Quantity of research output?
 - Both are subject to argument, and various social criteria applied by different groups.
 - Students and peers?

Measurement.

- Psychologists themselves – despite some claims to the contrary - can't access knowledge of any form outside of social discourse.
- Expertise in lay and academic communities is assessed through *social reproduction* of propositional and procedural knowledges.
- Subject to situated process of construction and interpretation.

Pragmatically, However:

- An expert's credibility swings on an understanding/belief from a given audience that the speaker is indeed an authentic 'expert'.
- Expertise has to be 'done' or performed effectively in situ *to be seen as 'expertise'*.
- People pervasively and microscopically attend to this matter when lecturing, giving conference papers, writing books and so forth.

The Research.

- Project: Explore the practical methods through which knowledge is actualised as 'expert knowledge' in concrete contexts.
- Taking broadcast expertise as example – directed at wide audiences, and easy on the ethics!
- Rise of expert punditry a prime feature of all broadcasting over the last twenty five years. Especially visible in sports, which is today's example.
- Vastly more time now allocated to this form of broadcasting.
- Using transcripts and video evidence from the BBC's 'Match of the Day' and 'Football Focus', though findings apply rather more widely.
 - Painstaking research, obviously.

Discursive Psychology.

- Differs from conventional psychology in that it has no explicit focus on internal 'thought processes' (see Edwards & Potter, 1992; Edwards, 1998).
- Does not try to explain why people do things; it's more about describing how we use language to do social actions, and produce action-oriented versions of the world (internal and external) in particular social contexts.

Foundational Principles 1.

- Borrows extensively from Conversation Analysis (Sacks, 1992), though eschews high technicality in favour of stronger topic-focus.
- Talk is constructed with reference to how it will be heard, and thereby subject to socio-contextual organisation, not simple or 'neutral' reflection of speaker's thought process.
 - E.g. This paper built around my presumptions regarding this audience.
 - Rather different to how I might deliver similar materials in first year lecture.

Foundational Principles 2.

- All talk is reflexive; it says as much about the speaker as the topic.
 - Freedom Fighter/Terrorist.
 - Specific word-selection performs clear social actions with tangible local consequences; you wouldn't mix them up by accident!
- ▣ **Search for practical 'methods' for doing stuff – the structures of social action.**

Three Broad Methods for 'Doing' Expertise in Broadcast Punditry.

1. Visually (Directorially) Initiated.
2. Self-Initiated.
3. Other-Initiated.

Visually Initiated.

- Visual captioning during topical passages of talk.
- Regular – 15 to 20 minutes.
- E.g.:
 - 'Lee Dixon: 458 Appearances for Arsenal between 1988 and 2002'
 - 'Alan Shearer: 283 goals in top flight football'
 - 'Alan Hansen: 620 League and Cup Appearances for Liverpool.'

Visually Initiated.

- Exclusively viewer-directed, and therefore produced almost solely for the purpose of reinforcing 'expert' identity of speaker.
- Recurrent reminder of speakers' 'rights' to address a topic in this context, and to be broadcast – authority issue.
- Factoids are:
 - Sometimes general, sometimes specifically tailored to local topic of discussion.
 - Specifically chosen to maximise inferable expertise.
 - Facts which could potentially contradict authority of expert avoided – 'times sent off', for example, unless number is so low as to imply sainthood.

Self-Initiated.

- The 'expert' himself (in this data always a man) makes explicitly or tacitly relevant his own *rights* to answer a question or make a point on a given topic.
- Two broad means evident in the data:
 - *Experience-based* self-initiation.
 - *Association or community-based* self-initiation.

Experience-Based Self-Initiation.

- Tasked largely to the local interaction, and particularly vivid when a grand or contentious point is being made:
 - Hansen: 'I've been in football for nearly 40 years and I've rarely seen a better game.'
- Explicitly flags up personal experience and, thereby, reflexively attends to defensibility of claim - functions a bit like 'I saw it with my own eyes'
 - Renders it difficult to contest statement without implicitly challenging eyesight (or sanity).
- 'I am [X] and I think [Y]' generally used when speaker reasons that the claim is potentially contestable.

Association-Based Self-Initiation.

- Again, tasked largely to the immediate context.
 - O'Neill: 'As Brian Clough would have said, and as just about anybody he managed will tell you, football is at least 90% perspiration. You can be as gifted as Ronaldo but if you do as little work as he just did, you'll be as anonymous as all you like, he just was.'
- Makes relevant both a renowned expert and a wide community in making a criticism of Cristiano Ronaldo.
 - Displays orientation to contentious nature of criticising Ronaldo.
 - Establishes the knowledge as 'well-grounded', predicated on an assumption that audience will understand who Clough was.
 - Reflexively aligns himself with a community of expertise.
- Common discursive method used by academics when dealing with potentially contentious subjects.

Other-Initiated.

- Work done by a speaker *other than the specific 'expert'* to reinforce their expert status.
- Directed at both the local interaction itself and the viewer.
- Two main forms:
 - *Pre-Talk* Other-Initiation.
 - *Post-Talk* Other-Initiation.

Pre-Talk Other-Initiation.

- Implicit and structural:
 - Chiles: *'So, first up, Lee, having watched that shocking defensive display, what do you think of Chelsea's chances this season?'*
 - Culturally we tend to refer/defer to the most 'knowledgeable other' first – specific allocation of turn makes reflexively available pundit's particular expertise in **defensive football** to listener.
- Explicit identity work:
 - Lineker: *'Well, that was some goalfest. I suspect you'd have loved playing against those defences, Alan?'*
 - Makes specifically relevant Shearer's identity as a prolific goalscorer, and thereby addresses authority to comment on the issue.

Post-Talk Other-Initiation.

- Allows for reassessment of prior talk, e.g. As validation of cliché production.
 - Lineker: *'Alan, do you think West Brom's lack of a cutting edge up front has been their main problem this season.'*
 - Shearer: *'Uhuu. At the end of the day, this game's about goals.'*
 - Lineker: *'Absolutely, and nobody knows more about goals than you!'*
- Retroactive work on potentially bland cliché by redirecting attention to Shearer's own experience, and thus his *entitlement* to make the 'expert' claim.
- Displays inference by Lineker that Shearer's statement might be hearable as bland cliché.
 - 'Authenticity' issue.

Core Themes 1.

- The talk analysed recurrently makes relevant a common-sense, rather than official, model of 'expertise'.
 - Expertise = Experience.
 - Expertise = Qualifications.
- Appeals to a more broadly cultural model of expertise – consistent with 'public targeting' of broadcast and aligned assumptions.

Core Themes 2.

- Also, regularity of attendance to 'expert identity' issues by producers, pundits and hosts indicates inference that what is being said has potentially contentious status 'as' expert knowledge.
- Football pundits can be seen to locally, microscopically attend to the given concerns regarding their status as experts in terms of authority and authenticity:
 - Experience in the field.
 - Place in community.
- *Not dissimilar concerns to those that academics might attend to when giving papers at conferences!*

So, What is an 'Expert'?

"A man fifty miles from home with a briefcase."

Will Rogers

Ta!

- And that's it from me...