This work is an attempt to complement social constructionist approach with the theory of discourse ethics. Therefore, the nature of this work is theoretical, though there is an empirical part backing up the theorizations. This thesis reflects a sort of scientific commentary style, and is written to resemble an academic story.

The basic idea of this paper is to take a critical look at social constructionism as a theory, and to provide an account of complementary perspective of discourse ethics. Discourse ethics, introduced by the German social theorist Jürgen Habermas suggests that all linguistic activities -- including that of social science -- must rely on discourse. Thus, it is discourse itself that provides means of justified articulation and argumentation regarding any subject matter.

Habermasians assert that it is possible both to settle and accept disagreements and achieve agreements in terms of ethical and acceptable discourse. According to Habermas, the method to gain an ethical discourse is acquired as an intuitive heritance through socialization. Thus, the communicative action that underlies all linguistic activities, outlines the rules and direction of rational discourse.

Habermasian rational discourse, however, has limitations. These limitations can be addressed as latent social constructs that hinder the potential of discourse. The function of this type of latent constructs is examined in this thesis through an empirical case. Theoretical suggestion is that as the latent constructs become manifested, the potential to gain common understanding through rational discourse increases. Thus, the participants of any rational discourse move closer to normativity that Habermas has described as that of an ideal speech situation. The philosophical reconstruction of an ideal speech situation theorizes the potential of communication to serve as a tool of social justification.

The conclusion of this paper can be outlined as a three-step process, depicting the elements that create the grounds for rational discourse: (i) One enters the domain of communication through socialization and becomes a potential participant of rationally cultivated discourse, (ii) One has to be skeptical towards language. It is important to recognize the constructedness of every meaning structure and discuss about these structures rationally, (iii) Finally, it has to noticed that latent constructs may hinder the cultivation of rational discourse. As these latent constructs are made more visible, the potential to gain common understanding among participants of discourse increases.

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social constructionism
Habermas
discourse ethics
latent constructs

Säilytyspaikka-Förvaringsställe-Where deposited
Muita tietoja-Övriga uppgifter-Additional information