INTRODUCTION

The monograph deals with discourse analysis as a theoretical and methodological framework for psychological research. The aim of the monograph is to justify the place of discourse analysis in psychological research through analyzing theoretical concepts that support its emergence and development, through clarifying its methodology, and through documenting the peculiarities of its usage in selected research tasks. The conceptual framework involves the theoretical approach recognizing two basic ways of forming knowledge and assumptions in social sciences – structural and post-structural thinking; the two require distinct reflection on words, concepts, and meanings.

Structural thinking encompasses assumptions and ways of thinking that have influenced a wide range of disciplines – from linguistics to philosophy, anthropology, and psychology of the 20th-century. I agree with Shazer (Shazer, Berg, 1992) that when looking at typical ideas about the structure of the psyche or when examining the idea of the relationship between consciousness and non-consciousness, we see how structural thinking has penetrated not only field-specific but also general consciousness of a society. The still prevailing structuralist view sees truth and meaning as something "beneath the surface" or "inside" the personality, system, structure. Older structuralist works (see e.g. Chomsky, 1965, Saussure, 1916/1996), in an effort to create a "science dealing with meaning", assumed that, at least when using one's mother tongue, the surface structure (of words used) can be "translated," "converted," or derived from deeper structures or the non-consciousness, and thanks to this, it is possible to find true meaning for every word.

Contrariwise, poststructuralism (see Harland, 1987) argues that it is the actual interaction of people that creates meaning. Contemporary poststructuralist thinking, according to Shazer (Shazer, Berg 1992), understands our world, i.e. the shared social, interactional context, as an "entity" created by language and words. From a poststructuralist perspective interpreting language as a universal medium, (metaphorically) language shapes the human world and the human world creates the whole world. The new post-

modernist approach (emphasizing that social reality is shaped by language) questions the possibility of finding general laws pursued by the structuralist stream of thought.

In Harland's view (1987), while structuralists focus more on the exact knowledge and revelation of the (human) world, and the meaning of phenomena is constant and identifiable for them, for poststructuralists the meaning is known only through social interactions and negotiations. According to Harland (1987), the meaning created in communication is accessible because it exists among people, and not because it is "hidden" within the individual psyche (system, family unit). Post-structuralist thinking brings a different view at cognizance in psychology (and other social sciences). In the newly developed post-structural concept of a language (Harland, 1987), this impossibility of changing the word meaning becomes possible.

The new approach in social sciences is significantly supported by Wittgenstein's ideas (1958/1970) – he favored the treating a language as an active means in creating meaning, rather than a mere neutral transmitter of meaning. Wittgenstein (1958/1970) argued that language does not acquire its meaning from its own mental or subjective substance, but it does so in its actual usage, i.e. in action, in organized interaction, or in "language games", as he puts it. I agree with Wittgenstein (1958/1970) that the meaning of a language becomes active in its usage, the meaning is not absolute, and its definition (if ever possible to be defined) is given by the social interaction framework.

The aforementioned poststructuralist thinking enabled the emergence and development of several methodologies – ethnomethodology, narrative analysis, feminist studies, but it also significantly supported the emergence and development of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis has long been associated with linguistics, semiotics, and sociology, and less with psychology. This is supported by the review of research conducted so far, which pointed to the usefulness of discourse analysis on societal issues, such as gender issues, racism, and ethnicity.

However, to the best of my knowledge, the application of discourse analysis in psychology is absent. Discourse analysis, originally prominent in dealing with societal problems, as it were, is a useful method in research

focusing on a person's psychological issues. The discourse analysis approach to examining psychological phenomena has been proved relevant in the pilot work (Mikulášková, 2008) – it contributed important information about the person's life perception. The study shows that through discourse analysis it is possible to clarify so far insufficiently explored psychological phenomena and processes (the process of stigmatization by psychiatric diagnoses, the formation of the identity of a mentally ill person, etc.). The present monograph reports on further research studies implementing discourse analysis.

The monograph has four chapters. The first chapter provides a survey of theoretical sources of discourse analysis. The second chapter defines discourse and depicts discourse analysis as an autonomous method of qualitative research. The third chapter deals with critical discourse analysis (including its aims and structures). The fourth chapter explicates the methodology of discourse analysis while providing an overview of research studies in which discourse analysis was used. The conclusion states the possibilities and limits of using discourse analysis in psychological research.