

RON SCOLLON and SUZIE WONG SCOLLON. *Nexus Analysis: Discourse and the Emerging Internet*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004. Pp.xvi+198.

Reading *Nexus Analysis* is like reading an autobiography. Readers will constantly find themselves sharing the authors' personal experiences of using computer and internet in the 1980s' Alaska. The description of the technology-mediated class and the vignettes beginning each chapter all invite a light-hearted reading. Yet it is indeed an academic volume in which the Scollons have tentatively formulated a theory of nexus analysis.

The word 'nexus' simply means "a link between two different ideas or objects which links them in a series or network" (p.iii), but the theory of nexus analysis is by no means simple. It has developed from a number of ethnographic studies conducted in the 1980s when the couple worked in Alaska. The studies presented in the book show that any change in the technologies of discourse is inherently and necessarily a change in the discourse itself. Chapter 1 begins with such changes and paves the way for the theory. While outlining an action-discourse-action cycle, the chapter also provides definitions of key concepts in nexus analysis, such as circumference, motive analysis, zone of identification, social action, mediational means, site of engagement, nexus of practice, historical body, interaction order, discourses in place, and discourse cycle.

Discourse cycle is an important concept in nexus analysis and is explained in-depth in Chapter 2. In nexus analysis, a social action takes place as a nexus of practice or nexus of some aggregate of 1) discourses (educational talk, for example) – *the discourses in place*, 2) some social arrangement by which people come together in social groups (a meeting, a conversation, a chance contact, a queue) – *the interaction order*, and 3) the life experiences of the individual social actors – *the historical body*. Each of these forms a cycle of discourse which circulates through the action. These three cycles of discourse are further exemplified in Chapter 3, where the use of technology in classroom for conducting social action is shown to bring some new discourses into play, to redistribute the interaction order, and to be differentially established in the historical bodies of the participants. These three cycles of discourse are the main concern of nexus analysis, but three main activities are actually involved in doing nexus analysis: 1) to find out which are the crucial cycles for any moment of human action, 2) to navigate those cycles as a way of seeing how those moments are constituted out of past practices and how they in turn lead into new forms of action,

and 3) to discover where points of change and transformation can be found that will allow new and more effective nexus of practice. These three activities are termed respectively as engaging the nexus of practice (details in Chapter 4), navigating the nexus of practice (in Chapters 5 and 6), and changing the nexus of practice (Chapter 7). A practical fieldguide for nexus analysis is also provided in Appendix to illustrate how these activities are conducted for researchers.

By engaging is meant to establish the social issue you will study, to find the crucial social actors, to observe the interaction order, to determine the most significant cycles of discourse and, most importantly, to establish your zone of identification. In other words, engaging nexus of practice is to identify the crucial mediated action (or actions) where that social issue is being produced, ratified, or contested. By navigating the nexus of practice is meant to map the cycles of the people, places, discourses, objects, and concepts which circulate through this micro-semiotic ecosystem looking for anticipations and emanations, links and transformations, their inherent timescales, and to place a circumference of relevance around the nexus of practice. In this task, a discourse and motive analysis is needed. Discourse analysis is based on critical discourse analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, and linguistic anthropology, and motive analysis is an aspect of discourse analysis which seeks to understand how participants, including the analyst, are positioning themselves in giving explanations for actions. By changing is simply meant to make these communications become actions which occur within the nexus of practice.

Nexus Analysis might be a good example for Wodak's (2001:4) statement that R. Scollon is among those scholars who have started with research in critical discourse analysis (CDA). As is read in this volume, nexus analysis begins with social problems and is keen on bringing about change, and this is true of Fairclough's analytical framework that starts with social problem and intends to cause change (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999:60). Nexus analysis makes analyses of trajectories or discourse cycles that intersect in nexus of practice and of the anticipations that are opened up by the social actions taken in that moment, and this goes along with Wodak's discourse-historical approach (e.g. Reisigl & Wodak 2001). In this sense, nexus analysis can be taken as a new approach to CDA, the field of discipline that favors interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinarity.

References

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