introducing
MEDIATED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Background

- ‘macro’ (e.g. society, education, technology, organisation) is ‘done’, ‘performed’, ‘constituted’ in people’s everyday, materially situated, embodied practices, also in their language use

- to understand (and *change*) any interactional practice, we need to get to the details of everyday language use and other meaningful action, that is, to the ‘messy sfuff’!

‘Meaning’

- Grammar (syntax): the internal structure of the tool we use to communicate
- Semantics: ‘hints’ at possible meanings that ‘seem to work’
- Pragmatics: the use of the words (and other signs):
  - Scenarios: abstract meaning-in-situations (cp. later Wittgenstein)
  - Real-world use: concrete, final ‘meaning’-in-interaction

Focus on action:
Mediated Discourse Analysis

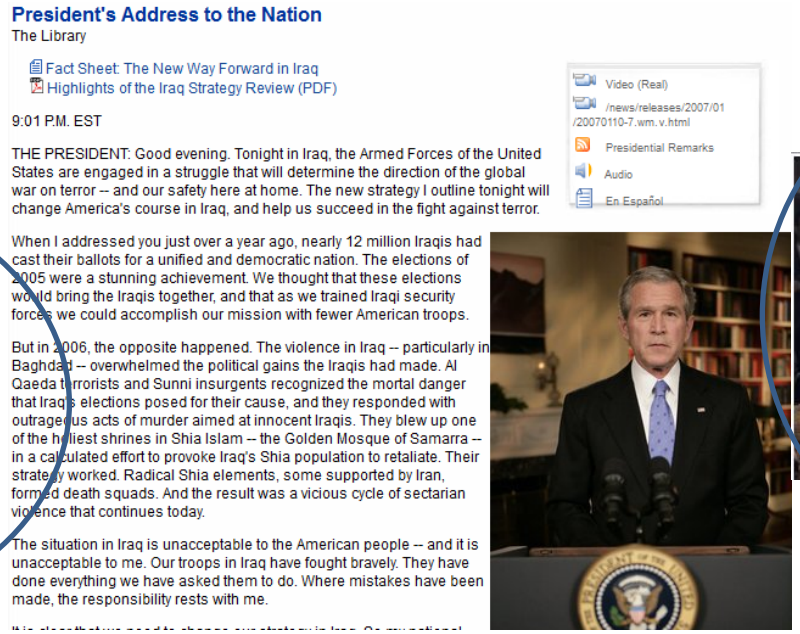
- Ron Scollon

  (Late Professor from Georgetown University, USA)

Why do information campaigns not work?

- Because they start with the 'discourse', the informative text, instead of social actions: what do people do to produce or use the text

MDA: start with social action



President's Address to the Nation

The Library

Fact Sheet: The New Way Forward in Iraq
Highlights of the Iraq Strategy Review (PDF)

Video (Real)
/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-7.wm.v.html
Presidential Remarks
Audio
En Español

9:01 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Good evening. Tonight in Iraq, the Armed Forces of the United States are engaged in a struggle that will determine the direction of the global war on terror -- and our safety here at home. The new strategy I outline tonight will change America's course in Iraq, and help us succeed in the fight against terror.

When I addressed you just over a year ago, nearly 12 million Iraqis had cast their ballots for a unified and democratic nation. The elections of 2005 were a stunning achievement. We thought that these elections would bring the Iraqis together, and that as we trained Iraqi security forces we could accomplish our mission with fewer American troops.

But in 2006, the opposite happened. The violence in Iraq -- particularly in Baghdad -- overwhelmed the political gains the Iraqis had made. Al Qaeda terrorists and Sunni insurgents recognized the mortal danger that Iraq's elections posed for their cause, and they responded with outrageous acts of murder aimed at innocent Iraqis. They blew up one of the holiest shrines in Shia Islam -- the Golden Mosque of Samarra -- in a calculated effort to provoke Iraq's Shia population to retaliate. Their strategy worked. Radical Shia elements, some supported by Iran, formed death squads. And the result was a vicious cycle of sectarian violence that continues today.

The situation in Iraq is unacceptable to the American people -- and it is unacceptable to me. Our troops in Iraq have fought bravely. They have done everything we have asked them to do. Where mistakes have been made, the responsibility rests with me.

-> the principal problem is: how to analyse social action (and discourse as part of it), not how to analyse a text

MDA: Central concepts

- **Mediated action**: all actions are mediated
  - e.g. *making a suggestion in a formal meeting*
    - putting up a finger, waiting for a go-ahead, talking, using texts, etc.

- **Mediational means**: cultural tools that are used in any action
  - e.g. *the language used in taking a turn-at-talk,*
    the material arrangement of the room (round table with chairs), the printed agenda for the meeting, coffee on the table, overhead/computer screen projector, laptops…

- **Site of engagement**: multiple social practices intersect to form a unique moment in history, enabling a mediated action to occur
  - e.g. *getting attention by lifting a finger,*
    waiting for a permission to do/say something…

MDA: Central concepts ctd

- **Practice and mediational means**: A mediational means is an object in the world as it has been appropriated within a practice;
  also through a person's practice-history-habitus
  - *e.g. lifting up finger to get attention/permission,*
    using the agenda to participate in a meeting…
- **Nexus of practice**:
  Consists of linked social practices that we recognize in the actions of others.
  A genre of activity and the group of people who engage in that activity
  - e.g. *visiting Second Life*
- **Community of practice**:
  Formed by a group of people who explicitly belong to a group and regularly interact with each other towards some common purpose or goal
  - e.g. *a group of women playing football once a week*

- When a nexus of practice starts knowingly transferring into a community of practice, the process is called the technologization of a nexus of practice

Task

- What is the central *mediated action* in your project (i.e. the phenomenon of interest)?
- With which *mediational means* is it done?
- Who are the *actors*?
- Through which *practices* has the mediational means been acquired/learnt?
- Does your phenomenon of interest occur in specific *nexus/communities of practice?*

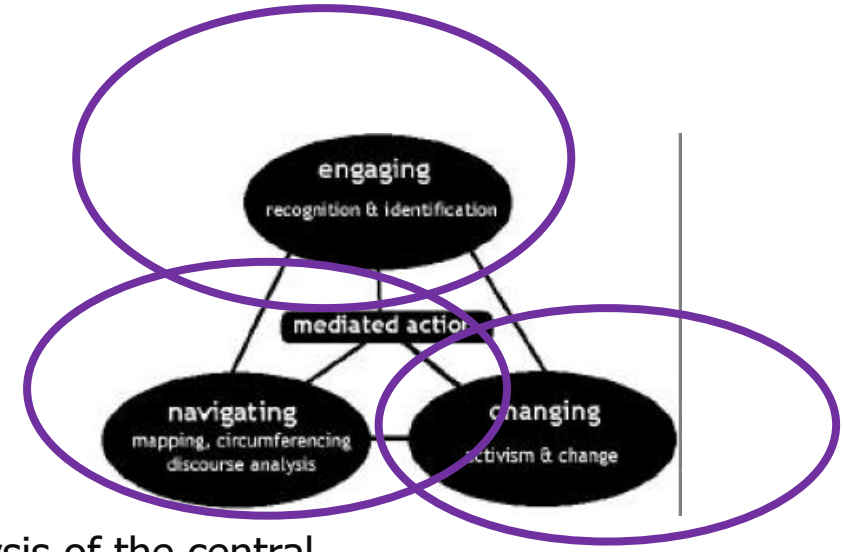
Nexus Analysis
ethnography,
‘action research’

Why NA?

- Useful when
  - interest in local interaction as
    - “non-anecdotal”:
      - how is the past socio-cultural history in this-action-now
      - what kind of action trajectories are possible/do occur?
        - » makes it possible to be interested in here-and-now events as results of and pointing at *other (past/future)* social actions – without becoming abstract (cf. social structures)
- Is also a good framework to “place” various types of data that have already been collected

Field research on (core) mediated action(s)

To gain an overall understanding of the social issue (~Critical Discourse Analysis) and to detect its key mediated action(s)



To do a thorough analysis of the central mediated action(s) + their 'pasts' and 'emissions'
-> often a 'longitudinal study of change & learning

To detect change and to help understand the motives behind ways of doing + how to change them to something else – with the participants ~ action research

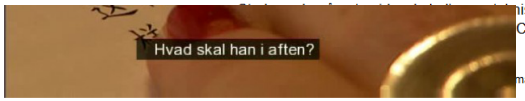
I Engaging the nexus of practice: To do

- Establish the social issue you will study
- Find the crucial social actors
- Observe the interaction order
- Determine the most significant cycles of discourse
- Establish your zone of identification

Ii Discourses survey: media content & public opinion

Iii Scene surveys: historical body questions, interaction order questions, discourses in place questions

Videnskabsminister: Ingeniører skal lære kinesisk



niske uddannelser skal kunne tale flere
Charlotte Sahl-Madsen. En række nye

mandag 08. aug 2011 kl. 09:07

Støvring Gymnasium har som det første i Norden åbnet Confucius Classroom, der skal udvide børn og unges kendskab til Kina.

Recommend 37 people recommend this. Sign Up to see what your friends recommend.

Den kinesiske økonomi buldrer afsted, og Kina bliver en stadig større spiller på den internationale scene.

Kan man tale kinesisk, står man derfor med et godt kort på hånden på fremtidens arbejdsmarked.

Det har de taget konsekvensen af på Støvring Gymnasium i Nordjylland. Gymnasiet har som det første i Norden åbnet Confucius Classroom, der skal udvide børn og unges kendskab til Kina.

Det indbefatter blandt andet øget fokus på kinesisk historie, religion og sprog.

Confucius Classroom er etableret i et samarbejde mellem Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning på Aalborg Universitet og Støvring Gymnasium.

Det giver gymnasiet kontakt til universiteter i Kina og mulighed for at trække på kinesiske sproglærere via det kinesiske undervisningsministerium.

- annonce -

PRINT ARTIKEL
SEND TIL EN VEN
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DEL PÅ TWITTER

SE OGSÅ
- Klassekammerater fik 54 12-taller
- 3.g. elever bortvist for julesang
- Gymnasium blokerer for Facebook
- Gymnasier indfører alkoholforbud

le og andre studerende på tekniske og
ge uddannelser skal fremover lære eksempelvis
som en del af deres uddannelse, mener
r Charlotte Sahl Madsen (K). Hun er klar med en
vordan de studerende kan blive styrket sprogligt,
Tidende.

røde tråd i sprogundervisningen. Jo mere
af globaliseringen, desto vigtigere er det, at vi
et skal være sprog i nye udgaver, og
er er en af de vigtigste. Når vi uddanner
også kunne kinesisk. Det må ikke forhindres af
vordan vi opdeler uddannelserne,« fortæller

Where mostly?

Interacting with whom?

What's the scene; which mediational means are used?

Iiii Focus groups
Check the results from 1.1. &1.2

I Engaging the nexus of practice: Strategies for getting answers

Triangulation

Four main types of data

members' generalisations (statements and claims members of the group make upon their own actions, ideologies and motives) – cp. opinion surveys

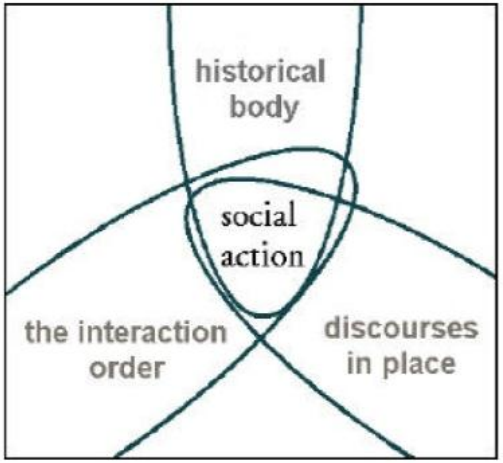
neutral ('objective') observation (e.g. video/audio recordings, participant observations) (cp. Critical Discourse Analysis, Discursive Psychology, Conversation Analysis)

individual member's experience (interviews and life histories to get to the habitus of the individual) (cp. CDA; DP for a critical look)

observer's interactions with members (critical discussion with the observed people – e.g. contradictions in their actions vs. their interview talk)

II Navigating the nexus of practice:

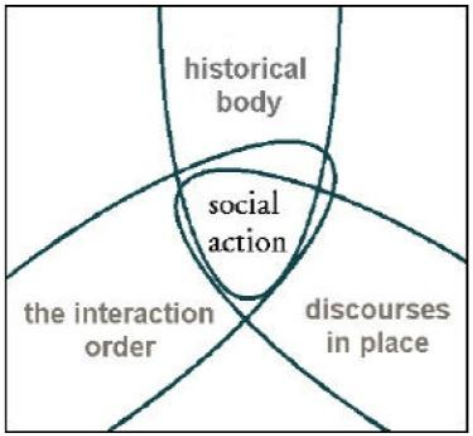
The development of the central social action(s)



- Semiotic cycles/itineraries
  - Persons
    - What enabled these participants do this action?
  - Semiotic aggregates
    - How is the environment used to do the action?
  - Overt & internalized discourses
    - Which discourses are central, which invisible?
  - (The changing use of) objects & concepts
    - How did this object/concept to be used here?

II Navigating the nexus of practice:

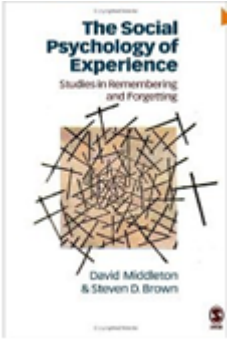
The development of the central social action(s)

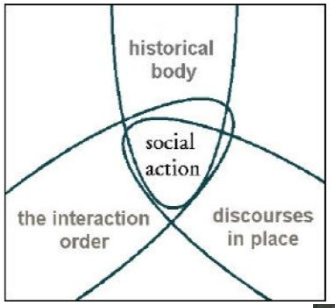


- Mapping: Focus on
  - Anticipations (e.g. design) & emanations
    - Is this following from before or producing a next?
  - Points and intervals
    - What are the most important transitions?
  - Timescales
    - As material-physical or discursively constructed
  - Links among semiotic cycles
    - Do these cycles always appear together?
  - Resemiotization
    - Is there a transformation in this action?
  - Circumferences
    - What are the narrowest/widest crucial timescales?

II Navigating the nexus of practice:

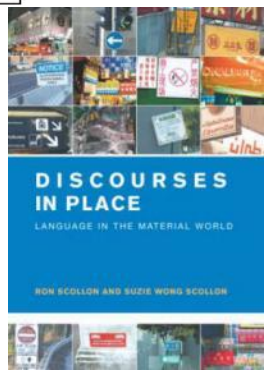
The development of the central social action(s)





1. An overall idea ("broadstroke maps")
   - History of the participants
   - Mediational means
   - Discourses
   - Place
2. Select some cycles to follow
   - A longitudinal study

- All this to
  - Understand the *historicity and materiality* of the mediated actions (past, future, embodiment, places/objects)



II Navigating the nexus of practice: With what means?

- Discourse Analysis:
  Critical Discourse Analysis, Interactional Sociolinguistics, Linguistic Anthropology
- Motive Analysis (Burke):

Discourse and its analysis

- The participants' use of speech
- The participants' use of texts
- Use of images and other semiotic systems
- 'Within' the participant ('internalized')
- 'Within' the environment ('ideology'?)
- The researcher's speech, writing, images

CDA: *How are social power interests produced in this discourse?*
- for example, how are native speaker norms exhibited in tests?

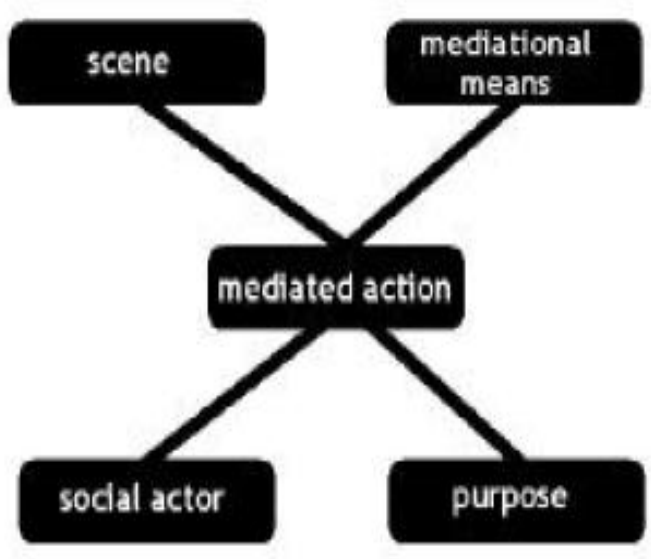
Interactional sociolinguistics: *What positions and alignments are participants taking up in relationship to each other, to the discourses in which they are involved, the places in which these discourses occur, and to the mediational means they are using, and the mediated actions which they are taking?*
- for example, how do the various actors relate to banks and 'greenwashing'?

Linguistic anthropology: *How are socio-cultural or historical thought or cultural patterns in the language (or other semiotic systems such as images or gestures) and its genres and registers providing a template for the actions of participants in the nexus of practice?*
- for example, how do the cultural patterns of a translator affect the translation process?

Task: your project

- Where does/did the phenomenon of your interest occur in ‘real life’?
  - Is your research data == the phenomenon?
  - Is your research data *about* the phenomenon?
- How experienced are the participants
  - with the phenomenon of interest?
  - with your data collection method?
- Which Discourses are relevant?
  - How are they detectable in your research data?
  - If not, (how) can you link them to your data?

To understand how agents describe actions (can be done through all stages, e.g. when checking media content)



How do participants ascribe and allocate motives for their actions?

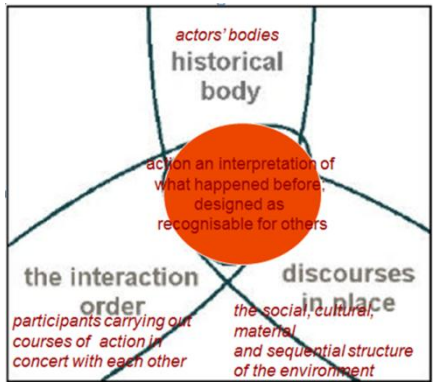
-For example:

"In order to learn, I attend various types of classes, with or without technology – or the teacher."

Motive Analysis (Burke)

Some further useful analytical tools

- **Contextual configuration** (Goodwin (2000) Action and embodiment within situated human interaction. *Journal of Pragmatics* 32: 1489 —1522) – cp. situated activity systems



- **Membership Categorization Analysis** (Eglin & Hester (1992) Category, predicate and task: The pragmatics of practical action. *Semiotica* 88(3/4): 243—268.) – cp. ideology

III ‘Planned’ change

- *What actions can you take as a participant-analyst in this nexus of practice that will transform discourses into actions and actions into new discourses and practices?*
  - ‘Action research’
    - » Turning the results of NA into actions
      - New ways of doing
      - Informing the site about your results
    - » Change: a new way of talking (cp motive analysis) and acting (cp nexus analysis)

Task

1. On the basis of today, formulate a question or a comment that we can discuss together