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2006

Review of Judith Baxter's (2003) Positioning Gender in Discourse: A Feminist Methodology

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Available at: <https://works.bepress.com/adamhodges/16/>

BAXTER, JUDITH (2003). *Positioning Gender in Discourse: A Feminist Methodology*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 215 pp.

Baxter's monograph is part theoretical treatise, part practical analysis, and part manifesto for the approach to discourse studies known as Feminist Post-structuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA). FPDA draws substantially from theorists such as Derrida (1978, 1987), Foucault (1972), Bakhtin (1981), and Barthes (1973, 1977), and positions itself as a useful supplement to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Conversation Analysis (CA).

The introduction and first three chapters of the book provide a strong theoretical grounding for the questions FPDA is concerned with and the methods it proposes to realize. Chapter 1 begins by posing a conundrum: How can the emancipatory goal of feminism coexist with the deconstructive effort of post-structuralism? What ensues is a valuable discussion of how feminist values can be asserted in conjunction with the postmodernist rejection of universal causes. Much of the discussion of the supposed divergence among feminist concerns and poststructuralism uses modernist feminism as the foil, and downplays the significance of third wave feminism's effective integration of poststructuralist theory. Nevertheless, Baxter's reconciliation of the tension furnishes a clear exposé of FPDA's underlying principles. At base, FPDA attempts to focus on small-scale, localized interventions rather than being involved in a 'single liberatory cause, for fear that, in a Foucauldian sense, a "will to truth" will lead to a "will to power"' (p. 190).

Chapter 2 delineates FPDA vis-à-vis the related approaches of CDA and CA. Baxter's discussion highlights the strengths and weaknesses of all three approaches in a manner that stresses their roles as complementary, rather than mutually exclusive paradigms. What distinguishes FPDA is its focus on 'a polyphonic approach to discourse analysis that attempts to disprivilege the authorial voice in order to give greater standing to a multiplicity of voices' (p. 186).

Central to the ethos of FPDA is the notion of self-reflexivity, which combines with a deconstructionist approach and a feminist focus to form its constituting principles. These principles are detailed in Chapter 3. 'Arguably, the FPDA approach to self-reflexivity adds to and enriches other forms of analysis, such as CA and CDA, by the particular focus it places on the authorial role of the analyst', states Baxter (p. 61). In other words, FPDA stresses the role of the researcher as but one among many interrelated voices that come together to produce the analysis. Borrowing from Barthes (1977), Baxter emphasizes the need for the researcher to use 'writerly' strategies in order to meta-analyze 'their own role in selecting and orchestrating their subject matter' (p. 51).

The second half of the book provides two distinct studies of FPDA in practice: a study of students' classroom interaction, and a study of a small company's management team meetings. Two chapters are devoted to each study – one that lays out the purpose, setting, and methodology, and one that provides the

analysis. The preliminary chapters to each case also provide discussions of how Baxter, drawing from ethnographic work, chooses the discourses (in a Foucauldian sense of the term) to focus on in the subsequent analyses. For example, in the classroom study (Chapters 4 and 5), Baxter examines three intersecting discourses: a discourse of approval, a discourse of collaborative talk, and a discourse of gender differentiation. She then provides a *denotative* description of the data followed by a *connotative* analysis that draws on ethnographic observation to explore how these three discourses alternately position students as powerful or powerless in particular contexts (cf. Barthes, 1973, 1977). Chapters 6 and 7 provide a similar look into the case of the management team.

The strength of the book is the theoretical chapters that clearly define the components of FPDA. Overall, Baxter makes a convincing case for the usefulness of FPDA as a supplementary tool in a discourse analyst's repertoire.

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

Reading *Nexus Analysis* is like reading an autobiography. Readers will constantly find themselves sharing the authors' personal experiences of using computers and the internet in the 1980s in 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