


## BOOK REVIEW

***Analyzing Digital Discourse: New Insights and Directions***  
**Patricia Bou-Franch and Pilar Garcés-Conejos Blitvich**  
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*Analyzing Digital Discourse: New Insights and Directions*, edited by Bou-Franch and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, provides orchestrated accounts of current trends in ‘digital discourse’, which seek to understand up-to-date communicative situations occurring online and the manifold affordances at users’ disposal. At the core of the volume lies the necessity to comprehend the latest technological evolutions enacting new forms of digital interaction, which should lead to adapt traditional approaches and adopt innovative, suitable methods to identify and analyse users’ semiotic and discursive practices. Such changes and adaptations are empirically examined in a plethora of digital genres and media from several sociocultural and interpersonal contexts.

Therefore, the studies deployed in the book will be undoubtedly of interest to researchers of digital communication and of its prominent medium- and user-dependent characteristics, from several interdisciplinary perspectives including, *inter alia*, Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) and Discourse Analysis (CMDA), ethnography, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, multimodality, social media analysis and pedagogy. Following the introductory chapter by the editors, the remaining chapters are thematically organised in sections which single out the study of digital discourse from four different vantage points: historical development, multimodality, face and identity, and ideologies triggered by language and media.

Part I is constituted by Bou-Franch and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich’s “Introduction”, where they establish the theoretical foundations for the analysis of digital discourse, which “lies at the intersection of (non)language resources, society, and technology”

(p.1). The relevance of holistic analyses of online communicative acts is stressed by emphasising the pertinence of considering semiotic modes and contextual clues. The three identifiable waves of CMC are reviewed to observe the progression in digital discourse approaches and methods over the years. Subsequently, the overarching parts and the individual chapters in the volume are suitably linked to the rationale of digital discourse and carefully contextualised by relating them to seminal, previous literature and present needs.

Part II contains Herring's contribution, who tackles the "Past, Present and Future" of CMC. She offers a retrospective, holistic overview of the Internet and the framework, outlining the consecutive technological affordances and research interests in the Pre-Web, Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 stages. Then, the author reinforces the urgent demand to reconceptualise CMDA by successfully integrating the framework of multimodality. Accordingly, new research directions are unveiled, such as communication on interactive multimodal platforms, graphical communication in the form of avatar-mediated communication and telepresence robot-mediated communication, all of them enabling media convergence and taking on new angles on social interaction.

Herring's chapter gives way to Part III, "Multimodality", dedicated to analyses of both everyday digital communicative acts, in the format of videocalls and news texts, and interactional resources, such as memes and WhatsApp emoticons. Sindoni investigates in Chapter 3, through a case study, a two-party intercultural Skype interaction, as a source of synchronous Video-Mediated Communication (VMC). Her goal is to grasp students' underlying ideologies and biases on language communication through their own perceptions and multimodal transcriptions. Students' critical observations of the video-related data are contrasted with the researchers' and complemented with students' comments. The verbal components scrutinised in the communicative exchanges are qualitatively supported by insights into kinesics, gaze and proxemics. The author ultimately claims the predominance of verbal resources over non-verbal ones and students' tendency towards the standardisation of chaotic, overlapping speech, highlighting the pedagogical advantages of manual, multimodal transcription of VMC to foster their multiliteracy skills.

In Chapter 4 Yus explores 100 image macro memes to track visual explicatures and implicatures from distinct text-picture combinations under the scope of cyberpragmatics. A set of inferential strategies is put forward to find out users' expectations and processes in the search for relevance in meme communication, and the saliency of meme elements is said to yield user-dependent non-linear reading paths. McCloud's (1994) taxonomy of multimodal combinations in comics is drawn upon to manifest that pragmatic relevant interpretations and the global meaning of memes are fully retrieved when both text and picture are interlaced. This is evidenced in the two most prominent categories: the additive, where one mode amplifies the implications conveyed by the other, and the interdependent, where the coexistence of the two modes is quintessential to elaborate an idea.

In Chapter 5, Johansson concentrates on the political opinion review genre in an online news text intertwining a written storyline with digital quotations, i.e. "multi-layered" and "polyphonic" linguistic phenomena (p.140). The genre analysis swiftly describes how the quotations –photos, tweets and a video– are integrated in the three topical sections of the texts, and confirms its commenting, rather than reporting, nature. The roles of journalists as gatekeepers and mediators are also acknowledged, based on the cross-media confronted dialogue arranged. In brief, Johansson verifies the hybridity of nowadays digital news genres, and her chapter is a first step in understanding the recontextualisation of digital quotations in news texts.

Pérez-Sabater closes this section with Chapter 6 about the gendered distribution of emoticons in communities of adult close friends through WhatsApp. The discourse analysis of eight male-only and female-only naturally-occurring chat threads is combined with an online questionnaire for initial insights and face-to-face interviews with participants. Dissimilarities concerning gendered emoticon use in her sample are statistically evidenced, with women's occurrences greatly outnumbering men's. Moreover, women's lengthy, intense style is in stark contrast with men's straight, brief and brisk contributions. Participants' perceptions of (un)necessary emoticons in the interaction demonstrate that women tend to build group intimacy and affectivity, while men favour instrumentality and avoid superfluous exchanges. Pérez-Sabater's qualitative results thus remark stereotypes of gendered emotional expression that need further analysis with a greater variability of participants and mixed group interactions.

Part IV, “Face and Identity”, covers a diverse set of identities (gendered, professional or social) and generic and discursive practices in relation to various digital platforms. Specific verbal and technical mechanisms are discussed for the creation, maintenance and deconstruction of users’ identity. Chapter 7, by Vásquez and Sayers China, specifically analyses gendered identity (de)construction through discursive and stylistic choices in Amazon reviews. Across two datasets of legitimate and parody reviews, the authors account for the ways reviewers build and perform their identity rendering both normative and counter-hegemonic gender ideologies in this digital genre. The analysis of the legitimate dataset unravels how users reproduce heteronormative gender ideologies in their discursive choices. On the contrary, users’ relational identity is much more frequently deployed and consciously visible in parody reviews, which contest engendered products and ideologies, mainly using deconstructive linguistic mechanisms.

Von Rohr, Thurnerr and Locher’s Chapter 8 delves into the construction of expert identities in online health practices, especially in advisory situations. A close discourse-analytic approach is shown around four objects of enquiry: anti-smoking websites, online advice columns, counselling emails and online forums. The embeddedness of the strategies identified in the digital environments and their affordances, the complementary co-occurrence of strategies, and the degree of interactivity of the medium that hosts them are regarded as key in considering how expertise is enacted in these contexts. Excerpts from the sub-corpora epitomise the different promotion of professionals, clients and laypeople’s authority and credibility in each of the scenarios.

Petroni’s contribution, Chapter 9, revolves around the linguistic processes and technological affordances that shape professional identity construction in LinkedIn, relying on Goffman’s framework on identity (1956). To that endeavour, a corpus-assisted analysis of top-ten nouns, adjectives and verbs in summary sections of LinkedIn is undertaken, displaying a general “scarce use of self-branding techniques” (p.268). These results are further assessed by taking a descriptive glance at other LinkedIn sections and their functionalities, with respect to the principles of social media logic (van Dijck & Poell, 2013). Hence, self-profiling and identity placement are demonstrated not to be as effectively prompted by users’ verbal practices as by the platform architecture and connectivity potential.

Last in this section, Chapter 10, written by Maíz-Arévalo, tracks face-saving techniques in a corpus of Facebook conversational turns from one Spanish common interest group. To Guerrero, Andersen and Afifi's (2014) classification of face-repairing strategies, the author pertinently adds two categories for the analysis of this digital context, namely expressing support and appealing to group's unity. Participants' most employed strategies in such a low-tied community are revealed to include expressing support, giving an account, showing ignorance of a conflict, using humour and aggression. The author's initial hypothesis that participants would not jeopardise their own face to help others proves interestingly wrong, since extensive fragments illustrate that "users are very participative when repairing the group's harmony" (p.305). Illustrative implications from the case study may set the ground to identify more meaningful generalisations.

Part V gathers a collection of studies around "Language and Media Ideologies", highlighting the sociocultural attitudes and practices endorsed in an array of digitally-mediated communicative situations, and how these contribute to the linguistic portrayal of the self. In Chapter 11, Antonio García-Gómez investigates the linguistic strategies of heterosexual British young men to construct and negotiate their gendered identities in the context of sexting: "the electronic swapping of sexually provocative images and/or texts" (p.313). The discourse analysis of guided discussions with participants is combined with personal interviews. Out of Hecht et al.'s (2005) three layers of the self, the communal layer is argued to stand out in their discursive self-representation through informative and eliciting pragmatic acts. Insights from the interviews corroborate participants' digital performance towards individual and in-group masculine positivity, but also discern competing, interwoven male narratives ranging from socially legitimate to unconventional, subordinated discursive identities.

Sifianou and Bella in Chapter 12 focus on the pragmatic lay conceptualisation of politeness and its relationship with self-representation in their Twitter Corpus of Greek Politeness. Their filtered analysis of tweets containing the keyword phrase "politeness is/is not" unveils users' definitions of politeness and the values they attach to this concept. Although a more visual representation of findings would be welcome, the authors noticeably show the consideration of politeness as an abstract, intersubjectively enacted phenomenon, and explain how the inherent disembodiment and required brevity

of Twitter influence the content of the messages, but do not impede users to exploit creative, playful linguistic mechanisms fostering their individual and social identities. Finally, recontextualisation and appropriation from other-than-Twitter Internet sources are discussed to pinpoint how networked users favour their searchability and self-representation.

Last chapter by Roeder, Miller and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich presents a preliminary study on the benefits of pedagogical intervention to increase undergraduates' metalinguistic consciousness of virtual communicative norms, specifically in texting practices. Participants' perceptions were surveyed to analyse their pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences, involving audience awareness and their positioning about text appropriateness. Quantitative findings and participants' qualitative comments attest that the target group bolstered the Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1993) and did achieve a more heightened accommodation to audience types than the control group. The interplay between the deployment of textese and positive self-presentation is also briefly explored, to underline that targeted class work on language pragmatic functions aids students in resisting prescriptive norms and raising their overall metalinguistic awareness.

Taken together, the chapters compiled in this edited volume entail a pioneering move forward in the analysis of digital communication and in the recognition of the multimodal and linguistic patterns that foreground specific communicative situations online. Bou-Franch and García-Conejos Blitvich's book is indeed worthy of reflection for those researchers who seek for contemporary digital practices, and may definitely inspire them to expand the scope and the tools to promote state-of-the-art approaches and analyses of digital discourse. The wide variety of objects of study and the refining of theoretical and methodological tenets introduced in this volume profusely invite researchers to continue looking into the technical affordances and users' (non)verbal choices characterising ever-changing digital communication.

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