

■ Introduction

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■ **OUR LIVES NOW**, in ways we are only beginning to understand, are lived with and through electronic media: We get news on the internet, read books on Kindle, find old friends on Facebook and new loves on OKCupid and Match.com. We network on LinkedIn, and create, enhance, and share images with Instagram; we “tweet,” “friend,” and “follow”; “post,” “pin” and “like”; and sometimes “#fail.” As we seek to understand these new ways of using language in our lives, the new worlds of words they entail in turn provide new means of understanding who we are and how we connect through language.

The chapters in this volume are drawn from the sixty-third annual meeting of the Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics (GURT), “Discourse 2.0: Language and New Media,” which is also the title of this volume. Included here are the five plenary addresses as well as selected papers by workshop leaders, panel organizers, and paper presenters, all of whom turn the attention of discourse analysis, broadly defined, to emerging and rapidly evolving new media platforms for interpersonal interaction. In this introduction we suggest some connections among the chapters as well as some focal themes of the volume.

In chapter 1, Susan Herring sets the stage for the volume by defining and describing Web 2.0, placing it in the historical context of computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) and showing that it can be understood through the lens of the tripartite classification suggested in her title, “Discourse in Web 2.0: Familiar, Reconfigured, and Emergent.” Considering a wealth of data sources such as Second Life, YouTube, Twitter, wikis, games, Skype, and texting, she outlines her CMDA toolkit, providing a set of methods grounded in discourse analysis, which may be used to uncover patterns of structure and meaning in networked communications.

The chapters that follow begin to provide the range of research that Herring calls for in her conclusion. In chapter 2, “Politics and Political of Ongoing Assessments: Evidence from Video-Gaming and Blogging,” Hervé Varenne, Gillian “Gus” Andrews, Aaron Chia-Yuan Hung, and Sarah Wessler develop and integrate the notion of “assessment” from the disparate fields of education, mental health, and conversation analysis, by exploring three examples of the phenomenon as played out in electronic discourse: first, an interaction at a video-game design camp in which an expert child takes over the controls from an incompetent adult; next, a group of four young Chinese friends playing video games in New York City, wherein three of the young men were expert, but the fourth, a young woman, was a novice; and, finally, a series of multiparty exchanges in which a number of people mistakenly tried to cancel AOL

accounts by posting messages to the blog of an individual who had written humorously about difficulties encountered when attempting to cancel an AOL account. In all of these contexts, the authors examine the linguistic means by which incompetence or expertise is assessed by participants in the interactions, considering how such "indexical propositions and their interpretation" are shaped by synchronicity (in face-to-face encounters), or in the asynchronicity exemplified in the blog data.

In chapter 3, "Participatory Culture and Metalinguistic Discourse: Performing and Negotiating German Dialects on YouTube," Jannis Androutsopoulos considers the asynchronous interactive nature of Web 2.0 discourse in a very different context: videos on YouTube that feature the Berlin dialect. Adopting a discourse-as-social-practice perspective, he proposes the concept of "participatory spectacle" to focus on the relationship between the videos and the viewers who comment on them, zeroing in on the ways that Web 2.0 discourse combines unique capabilities of video spectacle with the ability of viewers to voice reactions.

Chapter 4 shares concerns with the preceding chapters while focusing on yet another very different electronic platform. In "'My English Is So Poor . . . So I Take Photos': Metalinguistic Discourses about English on Flickr," Carmen Lee examines the self-assessments of their linguistic ability by nonnative speakers of English who use the language on Flickr, the photosharing website. She then examines the assumptions about and attitudes toward English, and toward its role in web discourse, that their comments reveal.

Visual images are also at the heart of chapter 5, "'Their Lives Are So Much Better Than Ours!' The Ritual (Re)construction of Social Identity in Holiday Cards." This chapter contributes to an understanding of meaning-making in popular culture by exploring how a website and its use reflect and affect social forces in contemporary society. The holiday cards that are the focus of Jenna Mahay's analysis are samples available on two websites that allow individuals to order personalized yet professionally printed holiday cards by uploading their own family photos to the website and selecting from a range of designs and greeting options provided. Mahay explores what one might identify, using Androutsopoulos's term the "participatory spectacle," by which the individuals create their own social identities, especially with respect to class and status, while reinforcing an idealized image of family happiness based on a heterosexual, two-parent family with young children.

Chapters 6–13 examine the use of electronic media in interpersonal interaction. In chapter 6, "The Medium Is the Metamessage: Conversational Style in New Media Interaction," Deborah Tannen reminds us that the concept of "discourse" is invaluable as a "corrective to the tendency to think of spoken and written language as separate and fundamentally different." She presents examples of (written) new media discourse in the form of email, Facebook, instant messaging, and text message exchanges among family and friends. She suggests that use of such conventions as capitalization, emphatic punctuation, repetition, and speed of reply constitute new media analogs to conversational style features in spoken conversation, with analogous risks of miscommunication and mutual misjudgment in interaction among women and men, as well as among members of different age groups. She also suggests that, given the availability of multiple potential media, the choice of medium itself carries mean-

ing (in her terms, sends metamessages), and that the risk of miscommunication is sometimes built into the mechanics of a given medium, such as a tag line automatically appended to text messages that is visible to the receiver but not to the sender.

In chapter 7, "Bringing Mobiles into the Conversation: Applying a Conversation Analytic Approach to the Study of Mobiles in Co-present Interaction," Stephen M. DiDomenico and Jeffrey Boase examine a segment of a video recording of a naturally occurring social gathering among three women friends in which the participants oscillated between attention to the people in the room and attention to their mobile devices. In their first example, drawing on Gibson's concept of "technological affordance," the authors demonstrate the importance of the asynchronous nature of texting in relation to the turn-taking organization of the face-to-face interaction. Their second example illustrates the blurring of boundaries between the two attention foci, as two of the participants become effective bystanders to an interaction between the third participant and the sender of a text message who is not in the room. This study thus demonstrates how new media discourse is integrated into face-to-face interaction, exemplifying how norms about such use are interactionally negotiated.

Continuing the exploration of interactional norms in chapter 8, "Facework on Facebook: Conversations on Social Media," Laura West and Anna Marie Trester examine interaction on Facebook to uncover how politeness norms are negotiated. Specifically, the authors explore the discursive means by which participants manage what Brown and Levinson characterize in their politeness schema as face-threatening acts (FTAs). Drawing from an ongoing ethnography, the authors contrast, on the one hand, fake Facebook interactions that create humor by featuring FTAs that violate politeness norms, with, on the other hand, naturally occurring Facebook interactions collected from users' walls, in which FTAs are largely avoided. With particular focus on how intertextuality is implicated in facework, the authors focus on the core practices of friending, posting, and replying, as well as some of the conversational rituals that Facebook has sought to operationalize: issuing invitations and sending birthday greetings. The authors thus consider how users navigate the balancing of face needs in this medium. Beginning and ending the discussion with the playful negotiation of norms surrounding one of the newer features on the site (tagging), this chapter sets the stage for the one that follows; together, the chapters demonstrate that ludic discursive practices are critical to the creation and navigation of interactional meaning in online contexts.

Whereas the chapters thus far have applied theoretical and methodical frameworks of anthropology (chapter 2), sociology (chapters 5 and 7), interactional sociolinguistics (chapter 6), and politeness theory (chapter 8), in chapter 9, "Mock Performatives in Online Discussion Boards: Toward a Discourse-Pragmatic Model of Computer-Mediated Communication," Tuija Virtanen applies and contributes to the semantic theory of performativity by examining the use of the word "hereby" in what she characterizes as "mock performatives" on a discussion board devoted to beauty and fashion. She introduces the term "discourse transformer" to highlight the way that these mock performatives signal a shift into a "play mode" by referencing a familiar institutional script. She ends by suggesting that her analysis provides a discourse pragmatic model for the study of performativity in computer-mediated communication.

Chapter 10, "Re- and Pre-authoring Experiences in Email Supervision: Creating and Revising Professional Meanings in an Asynchronous Medium," by Cynthia Gordon and Melissa Luke, focuses on the commonly practiced but little studied use of email in exchanges between student interns and their supervisors in a counselor education and training program. Drawing on and developing Bakhtin's notion of dialogue, the authors show that supervisors' "reinforcement" and "reframing" of interns' discourse constitutes a kind of "re-authorship," while their practice of advice giving constitutes a kind of "pre-authorship." The authors' analysis identifies the linguistic devices by which these goals are accomplished, thereby documenting how email is used in the development of professional identity within this educational environment.

An educational context is also the subject of chapter 11, "Blogs: A Medium for Intellectual Engagement with Course Readings and Participants," by Marianna Ryshina-Pankova and Jens Kugele. The data for this chapter are blog entries written by students in a college course as part of an online discussion of course readings. The authors apply the systemic-functional framework of ENGAGEMENT to identify the linguistic strategies the students use, and the extent to which these strategies evidence learning—that is, knowledge construction and sharing. The Bakhtinian concept of dialogicality enables them to provide insight into how students use interactive blogs to account for their positions, establish authority, integrate information from various sources in intersubjective stancetaking, and accomplish tasks and activities that the authors identify as being essential to academic learning and knowledge construction. This chapter thus illustrates how interactive blogs can function in a college course, and offers evidence for their efficacy as a vehicle for learning.

Chapter 12, "Reading in Print or Onscreen: Better, Worse, or About the Same?" is the third to focus on an educational context. Naomi Baron begins with a survey and discussion of print culture, then examines how electronic books change one's conception as well as use of written texts. She then describes and presents the results of a pilot study she conducted to compare college students' reading in these two media, in order to answer the question posed by her title: What respective advantages and disadvantages do the students report with regard to reading on paper and on screens? She concludes with a discussion of how the frequent use of electronic reading material is transforming students' attitudes toward and assumptions about texts as well as their tendencies to multitask. In exploring the effects of the internet upon cognition, Baron's chapter thus addresses issues of global import to individuals' lives and to society at large.

That broader perspective characterizes the final chapter as well. In chapter 13, "Fakebook: Synthetic Media, Pseudo-sociality, and the Rhetorics of Web 2.0," Crispin Thurlow offers a global word of caution about the "often hyperbolic claims about 'social media' made in the context of education, the media, commerce, and politics." Aligning himself with the subfield of critical discourse studies and other approaches that address the role of language in societal power relations, Thurlow shows that entities with institutional power and commercial motives, such as advertisers, corporations, and politicians, invoke "highly stylized, commoditized notions of language and communication" to create a false impression of sociality. Much as Baron cautions about some negative effects of reading online, Thurlow concludes by caution-

ing that the institutional use of discourse that mimics the social functions of talk in interpersonal interaction threatens to blur distinctions between “the public and private, the personal and institutional, and the corporate and social.”

To bring this overview full circle, we conclude by observing that, taken together, the chapters in this volume, like the many papers presented at GURT 2011, support Susan Herring’s observation that if this work “demonstrates only one thing, it should be that Discourse 2.0 offers a rich field of investigation for discourse analysts”—and, we might add, that the field of discourse analysis offers a rich source of insight into the language of new media and the way it is shaping human lives.