social media discourse

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DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

- **Texts:** written texts but also conversations (written, spoken), videos, photos, drawings, paintings, street signs, websites, software interfaces, video games – any aggregate of semiotic elements that can function as a tool for people to take social action.
- **Contexts:** social and material situations in which texts are constructed, consumed, exchanged and appropriated.
- **Actions and interactions:** what people do with texts and what they do with and to each other.
- **Power and ideology:** how people use texts to dominate and control others and to create certain ‘versions of reality’.

(Jones, Chik and Hafner 2015)

SOCIAL MEDIA

Internet-based sites and services which promote social interaction between participants through the exchange and sharing of user-produced content.

**Examples:** blogs, microblogging (Twitter), social network sites (Facebook), content-sharing sites (YouTube, Instagram), wikis, podcasting, discussion forums, chatrooms, virtual worlds (World of Warcraft), livecasting (Skype)

How do social media make us rethink (1) text, (2) context, (3) action, (4) interaction and (5) power?

1. QUALITIES OF DIGITALLY MEDIATED TEXTS

   a. **Texture:** connectedness of texts (cohesion, coherence) – loose, tight.
   b. **Intertextuality:** hypertextual linking, embedding, copying-pasting, combining, curating, references to popular culture through purely linguistic resources.
   c. **Dialogic character:** reading and writing like conversation; readers write to writers and writers write with an audience in mind.
   d. **Multimodality:** rich combinations of semiotic modes (writing, visuals, gifs, sound); resemiotisations.
   e. **Materiality:** Web pages different from newspapers textually and physically; ways we physically manipulate texts (e.g. clicking, tapping, dragging, swiping, pinching).

(Jones, Chik and Hafner 2015: 1-17)
2. CONTEXT

- **Participants**: people who take part in interaction; relationships.
- **Imagined context**: projected contexts created by participants on the basis of their knowledge and the cues provided in computer-mediated communication.
- **Extra-situational context**: participants’ offline social practices, cultural values, demographics (e.g. age, gender, ethnic or national identity), specific values related to their involvement in particular communities (e.g. friendship/educational cohorts, hobby or interest groups, colleagues, fan communities).
- **Behavioural context**: physical situation of social media interaction (e.g. place and time of interaction, devices).
- **Textual context (co-text)**: surrounding interactions (text published in preceding / subsequent posts or comments); semi-automated info (e.g. timestamps), location-based info (e.g. ‘check ins’); screen layout and resources.
- **Generic context**: social media site in which communication takes place, site’s stated purpose, rules and norms for conduct (netiquette).

(Page et al. 2014: 33)

3. ACTIONS

**Affordances**: the particular ways social media make certain kinds of action possible.

- Interactivity
- Synchronicity – asynchronicity
- Replicability
- Storage capacity
- Persistence of content / durability
- Searchability
- Mobility
- Reach
- Social cues (visual, vocal)
- Private/public nature

(boyd 2010; Madianou & Miller 2013)

**NOTE**: Technology does not determine uses.

4. INTERACTIONS

Digital technologies have challenged the ways discourse analysts approach the analysis of interaction (Jones, Chik and Hafner 2015).

- turn-taking, adjacency, topic management
- monitoring and contextualisation; new forms of phatic communication (e.g. ‘liking’)
- new participation frameworks

**What constitutes an interaction in social media?**

1. the ways technologies interact with humans
2. the ways technologies facilitate human-to-human interaction (Rafaeli & Ariel 2007)
4. IDEOLOGY & POWER

- Digital technologies affect
  - how people understand the world and treat one another
  - how this affects how social goods (material and symbolic) get distributed
- Creating, learning, and self-improvement vs commercial practices and promotion of dominant values of competition and conspicuous consumption as in ‘old media’.
- Not so much expressed in texts but in the more subtle ways software and web interfaces channel users into certain actions and interactions (e.g. celebrity promotion, commercial interests).

10 REASONS WHY STUDYING SOCIAL MEDIA IS CRUCIAL FOR UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The world is increasingly textually mediated and social media are an essential part of this textual mediation.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Basic linguistic concepts are changing in meaning – new set of concepts is needed.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>New multilingual encounters online shift the relations between languages.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Linguistic resources are drawn upon to assert identities and to represent the self in social media.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>People combine semiotic resources in new ways and they invent new relations between language and other modes of meaning making.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Social media provide spaces for reflection upon language and communication.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Language is central to the constant learning in social media.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Vernacular language practices are becoming more public and circulated more widely.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Language is central to new forms of knowledge creation and enquiry.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>New methods for researching language are made possible.</td>
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(Barton & Lee 2013)

TASK

Read the following examples from Facebook (Georgalou 2014) and try to identify the kinds of linguistic and semiotic resources used to present the self.

Example 1

Context: Helen (Greek, 33 years old, linguist) is going to Budapest to meet her significant other who lives there and then she is visiting Berlin to participate in a conference.
Example 2  
**Context:** Romanos (Greek, 23 years old, IT support)

![Image](image1.png)

Example 3  
**Context:** Carla (Greek, 35 years old, translator) has two profiles on Facebook: a personal and a professional one. One of Carla’s Facebook friends (female, Greek, translator) writes on Carla’s Facebook Wall (professional profile) to congratulate her on her work.

![Image](image2.png)

Example 4  
**Context:** Alkis (Greek, 31 years old, MSc student in Services Management, Athens University of Economics and Business) and his fellow students are finishing off writing their MA dissertations.

![Image](image3.png)
Example 5
Context: Alkis and Helen post about the Greek crisis.

Example 6
Context: Gabriel (Greek, 22 years old, student in International and European Studies, University of Piraeus) thanks his Facebook friends for their birthday wishes.

PowerPoint presentation
Available online:
Bibliography


Georgalou, M. (forthcoming). Memeing the Greek crisis on social media.


