

"Language and Superdiversity: (Dis)identification in social media" research seminar series
Department of Languages • University of Jyväskylä

Researching social media discourse: Insights from a study on Greek Facebook users

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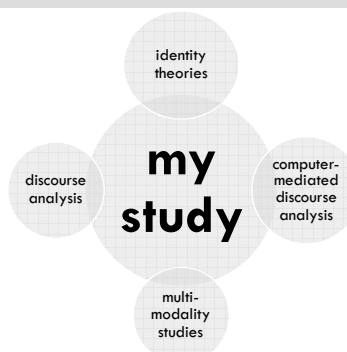
AGENDA

- Aim of study
- Set up of study
 - Methodology
 - Informants
 - Data
 - Ethics
 - Challenges faced and lessons learnt
- Thesis structure

AIM OF STUDY

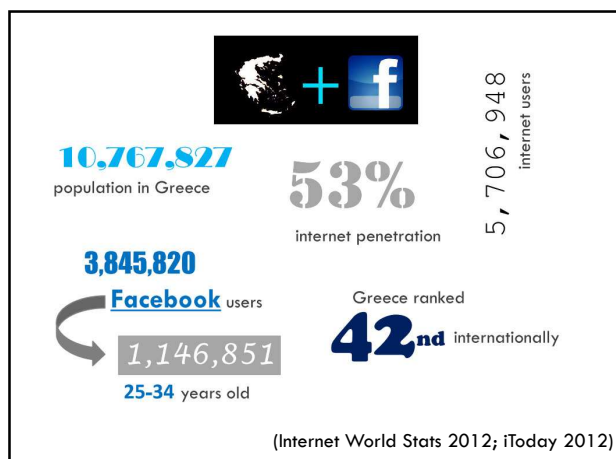
- Discursive construction of **identities** within **Facebook**
 - How do users construct themselves?
 - How do Facebook friends co-construct them?
 - How does multimodality contribute to these id constructions?
 - What kind of textual practices do users adopt in crafting meaningful identities?

SITUATING STUDY



METHODOLOGY

- **Discourse-centered online ethnographic approach**
 - systematic and longitudinal observation of Facebook profiles
 - direct (face-to-face / mediated) engagement with their owners
 - complementary to textual analysis of online data
(Androutsopoulos 2008)



RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

- Email with study purposes
- Online questionnaire
- Semi-structured interview
- **Problem:** sent to 100+ – only 33 replies 😞
- Friends of friends – convenience sampling
- 5 interviewees
(email, IM, Facebook messages)

ROMANOS

- born 1989
- technical support to IT company
- videogame programming
- Athens, Greece
- military service during 2012-2013
- recruited May 2010
- FB account since 24 November 2007

CARLA

- born 1975
- BA Translation & Interpreting
(Greek, English, Spanish, Portuguese, French)
- translator of Latin American literature
- Athens, Greece
- recruited October 2010
- 2 Facebook profiles
 - [personal](#) (since November 2007)
 - [professional](#) (since 20 January 2009)

ALKIS

- born 1981
- BA Translation & Interpreting (Greek, English, French)
- MSc Services Management
- real estate agent & freelance translator
- Athens, Greece
- recruited December 2010
- FB account since November 2007
(**NB:** everything deleted from 7-12-2007 to 21-10-2010)

GABRIEL

- born 1990
- BA International & European Studies
- MA European Studies & International Economics
- Athens, Greece
- Bologna, Italy (2012-2013)
- Washington, USA (2013-2014)
- recruited July 2011
- FB account since 27 November 2008

HELEN

- born 1979
- BA English Language & Literature
- MA English Language & Literary Studies
- PhD Linguistics
- Assistant Professor of Linguistics
- Athens, Greece & UK 2 months / year
- recruited October 2011
- FB account since September 2007

DATA

- Participant observation: October 2010 to April 2013 (≈ 2,5 years)
 - profile info
 - status updates
 - comments
 - video & article links
 - photos
 - interview excerpts
 - survey & field notes
 - informants' comments on drafts
- ↓
3 of them **metalinguistic awareness**

□ Tools: PicPick Image Editor, Pixlr editor, Pixlr o-matic, Word, Excel

MUTUALITY WITH INFORMANTS

- 'Like' their status updates & posts
- Wish them on name days & birthdays (and **vice versa**)
 - e.g. helped Alkis with his own MA research
- **Learn from my informants' social media practices**
- have met Helen face-to-face – **strange feeling**

ETHICS

- **Consent form:** info about themselves, status updates, comments, friends' comments, images, other multimedia → **confidential + academic purposes only**
- **Pseudonymity** (chose their own fictive names)
- **Blurring** photos of faces + revealing info
- **Thorny issue:** handle data from users that had not given their consent
 - **Show** them what I was doing with their data
 - **Ask** the subject to inform them

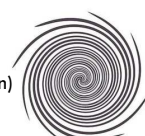
NO CONSENT

*Ms Georgalou, good evening. I'm really very sorry but I can't help you. Apart from commenting on the country's political reality, the particular post and the follow-up discussion had **personal overtones** too as I maintained a close personal relationship with Mr. [refers to Gabriel with his surname]. I would ask you **not to include in your research any comment of mine** neither my posts on his wall nor other pieces of personal information. Because of the fragility of the issue I would expect that he would have mentioned this to you! I wish you good luck with your research and I hope my denial will not constitute a serious obstacle. Anyway his profile is full of such type of posts which are even more interesting. All the best!*

ETHICS II

DATA PROCESSING

- **started** when data available; **continued**
 - reading & re-reading
 - notes
 - varied coding (e.g. language, themes)
 - refining coding (e.g. chapter preparation)
 - back and forth btw theory & data
 - linking & sorting
 - deciding
- **lost in translation?**
 - time-consuming
 - puns, slang, idiomaticity, culture-specific references



REFORMULATION OF RESEARCH PLAN

- started PhD in 2009
- unexpected turn within next years →
Greek financial & political **crisis**
 - dominated informants' lives
 - dominated content of their Facebook posts
- ≈1/3 of data about crisis 😞
- examine **stance-taking**

THESIS STRUCTURE

- Introduction
- Identity
- Facebook
- Methodology
- School & professional identity
- Place & identity
- Time & identity
- Stance-taking & identity
- Privacy, audiences & identity
- Conclusion

Thank you!